

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-10. (Canceled).

11. (Currently Amended) A method for monitoring, via a diagnostic device, a performance reliability of at least one of a control unit and at least one sensor of a safety device for protecting a vehicle occupant, the diagnostic device being arranged in a motor vehicle together with the control unit and the at least one sensor and the diagnostic device including an arrangement for coupling to the at least one sensor of the safety device, comprising the steps:

- a) recording, via the coupling, ~~a value corresponding to at least one of a negative acceleration, a velocity, and a pressure, caused by~~ an impact;
- b) deriving a value for an impact severity from the ~~recorded value~~ impact;
- c) comparing, by a comparator of the diagnostic device that provides a predefined threshold value for a proper functioning of the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor, the ~~[[a]]~~ value for the impact severity to ~~[[a]]~~ the predefined threshold value; and
- d) outputting, by an output device of the diagnostic device, an error-function signal in the event that the value for the impact severity exceeds the predefined threshold value, the error-function signal indicating that a proper functioning is ~~is~~ no longer ~~is no longer~~ ensured for the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor;

wherein the predefined threshold value is lower than a threshold value provided for a triggering of a restraining arrangement assigned to the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor.

12. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 11, further comprising:
calculating the value for the impact severity for each of the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor; and
comparing each calculated value to a respective predefined threshold value for each of the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor.

13. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in Claim 11, wherein one of (a) the deriving of the value for the impact severity and (b) a setting of the predefined threshold value is based on information from a plurality of impacts that occur over time ~~impact processes is taken into consideration in determining one of the value for the impact severity of the control unit and the predefined threshold value associated with the value for the impact severity.~~

14. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 11, further comprising:
lowering the predefined threshold value with an increasing operating time of the safety device.

15. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 11, further comprising:
determining the predefined threshold value from at least one of a crash test and one of calculations and findings derived therefrom.

16. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 11, further comprising:
implementing a read-out and an analysis of an output error-function signal by at least one of the control unit and a service facility testing device.

17. (Canceled).

18. (Currently Amended) The diagnostic device as recited in Claim ~~[[17]]~~ 20, wherein a functionality of the diagnostic device is implemented in the control unit, either entirely or partially.

19. (Currently Amended) The diagnostic device as recited in Claim ~~[[17]]~~ 20, wherein, for each one of the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor, a respective threshold value is predefined that is typical for one of the control unit and the at least one sensor.

20. (Currently Amended) A [[The]] diagnostic device as recited in Claim 17 for monitoring a performance reliability of at least one of a control unit and a least one sensor of a safety device for protecting a vehicle occupant, comprising:

an arrangement for coupling to the at least one sensor of the safety device to record an impact, the diagnostic device being arranged in a motor vehicle together with the control unit and the at least one sensor;

a comparator that provides at least one predefined threshold value for a proper functioning of the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor, the comparator comparing a value for an impact severity derived from the impact to the predefined threshold value; and

an output device that outputs an error-function signal in the event that the value for the impact severity exceeds the at least one predefined threshold value, the error-function signal indicating that a future proper functioning is no longer ensured for the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor;

wherein the predefined threshold value is lower than a threshold value provided for a triggering of a restraining arrangement assigned to the at least one of the control unit and the at least one sensor.

21. (New) The method as recited in Claim 11, wherein the impact is recorded by recording a value corresponding to at least one of a negative acceleration, a velocity, and a pressure caused by the impact.

22. (New) The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the lowering of the predefined threshold value includes providing an absolute value representation of the predefined threshold value, and decreasing the absolute value representation of the predefined threshold value.